

Chapter and Conference Committee A Matters



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Conference & Chapter Committees A

The primary functions of a conference or chapter Committee A are **to promote the adoption of AAUP principles** into faculty handbooks and **to assist faculty with concerns or complaints.**



This Webinar Series

Assisting faculty with concerns or complaints requires familiarity with

- **AAUP principles**
- **Applicable institutional regulations** found in faculty handbooks.

Previous webinars gave an introduction to using **the AAUP Redbook** and **how to read faculty handbooks**. This webinar addresses **how to assist faculty** with concerns or complaints.



Before You Begin

- Inform your colleagues on campus or your members in the state of the purpose of a Committee A.
- Include contact information in newsletters for the committee.



An Important Proviso

- The AAUP, and thus its chapters and conferences, defends policies and principles, not individuals.
- Public actions and statements by AAUP members and officers should focus on policies and procedures rather than accusations or personalities.



Dos and Don'ts

Dos:

- Always be courteous, professional, and helpful to the extent you can.
- Listen and ask questions; don't argue.
- Find out exactly what the problem is and what remedy the faculty member is seeking.



Dos and Don'ts

Dos:

- Consider whether the issue is sufficiently complex or volatile to warrant consultation with the staff at the national office.
- For your own protection, say at some point in the conversation, “I am not an attorney, and what advice I may give you is not legal advice.”



Dos and Don'ts

Dos:

- Keep a written record of your telephone conversation(s), and retain correspondence, e-mail messages, and other documents on each complaint.
- Advise any faculty member who calls you to develop and maintain a careful chronological account of what has happened to him or her.



Dos and Don'ts

Dos:

- Ask for any documentation you may need (e.g., institutional regulations, department bylaws).
- Compare institutional regulations to AAUP standards.



Dos and Don'ts

Dos:

- If you are too busy to attend to the faculty member's concerns, are the least bit uncertain about the issues, or perceive a potential conflict of interest, suggest that the faculty member call the AAUP Washington office and consult with the Committee A staff.



Dos and Don'ts

Don'ts:

- Never allow yourself to be rushed.
- Do not *assume* that the faculty member is always right.
- Do not *assume* that the AAUP can always help faculty members who believe that they have been mistreated.



Dos and Don'ts

Don'ts:

- Avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest.
- Unless you have the relevant provision in front of you, do not give advice on deadlines for filing appeals.



Questions to Ask

- Has the person exhausted potential avenues of redress at the campus?
- What remedies are available?
- Do they accord with what the AAUP recommends?



Questions to Ask

- What, if anything, has already been tried (e.g., chair/dean conference, grievance, attorney)?
- Is an AAUP observer needed to facilitate a conference with a chair or dean?
- Is there a discipline-based organization that may be able to help (e.g., a professional ethics or rights committee in the person's field)?



Assisting with Grievances

- An important function of a conference or chapter Committee A can be to help faculty with filing grievances.
- Making sure that what information is included in the grievance and how it is presented is in the best interest of the faculty member and not an *ad hominem* attack is important.



On Tenure Cases

- A common reason for a faculty member to seek advice is that they have been denied tenure.
- It is imperative that an AAUP chapter or conference not take a position on the merits of the faculty member's tenure case.
- Three main questions: reasons, appeal, and notice.



Communicating with Administrations

- In communicating directly with an administration, remember that most people do not differentiate between and among various parts of the AAUP.
- Always allow for the administration to provide you with an explanation that may clarify the issue.



Another Important Proviso

- Chapters and conferences must not undertake investigations, and at no time should the local chapter or conference “sanction” or “censure” an offending administration.



In the Longer Run

- Maintain a list of attorneys in the area who are familiar with higher education law.
- If possible, establish a standing Legal Defense Fund to help defray the cost of a faculty member's first consultation with an attorney.
- Find law school faculty who might help in legal matters on a *pro bono* basis.



QUESTIONS?

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Thank You!

See our State Committee A Resources on the web:

<http://www.aaup.org/about/elected-leaders/assembly-state-conferences/conference-support/state-conference-committee>

Contact the presenters:

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